

SOME NOTES ON OXALIS MEISNERI SOND. AND OXALIS CANA SOND.

By

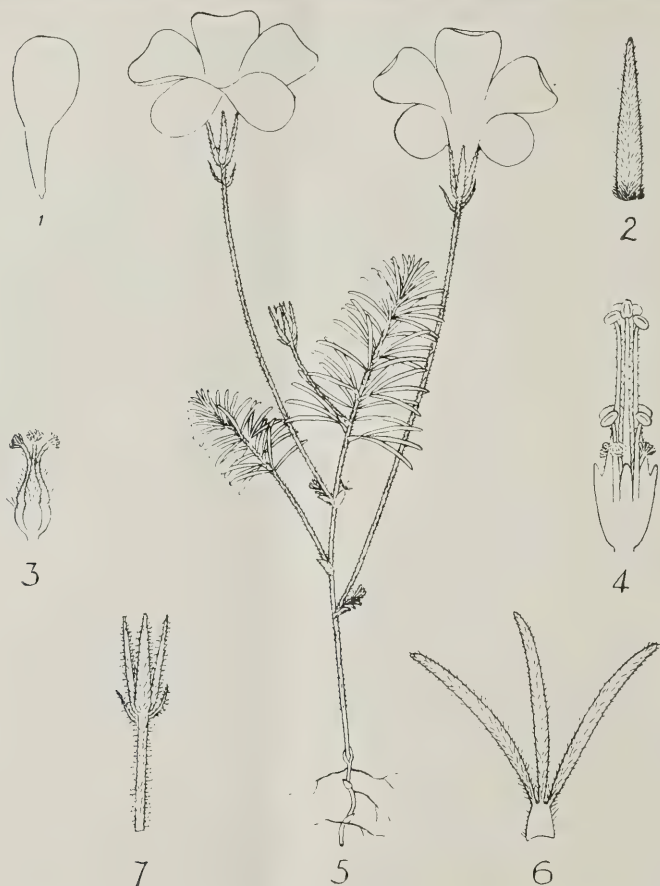
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Oxalis Meisneri Sond., with pale violet flowers and gland-tipped hairs and *Oxalis cana* Sond., with yellow flowers and simple hairs only, are very local and not by any means well-known plants. They were first described by Sonder in Flora Capensis, Vol. I (1860), 345, where he observes that *O. cana* is "known from *O. Meisneri* by the shorter and densely hairy, not glandular leaves and yellow flowers." With this combination of differing characters before him, Sonder was very naturally misled into believing them to be different species. In his praiseworthy attempt to give an account of the South African Oxalis in the Flora Capensis, in most cases he had at his disposal very limited and poor material, often without bulbs, indeed *O. Meisneri* was probably only represented by the single specimen Krauss 1156 !, Tulbagh (*type*), which is now in Sonder's herbarium at Stockholm. *O. cana* was only known to him through Burke and Zeyher (un-numbered) !, Hex River (*type*), a locality which is believed to be false, for the plants almost certainly came from the vicinity of Tulbagh.* This collecting is represented in the South African Museum at Cape Town and several herbaria in Europe.

Later knowledge has disclosed the fact that *O. Meisneri*, the form with rather pale violet (*vide* Sonder rosy-violet) flowers occurs near Tulbagh, apparently more commonly, with simple hairs only and, indeed, I have been unable to re-discover the glandular or *type* form, though I admit that I have not been able to search the Tulbagh district very thoroughly. Further, the yellow-flowered form occurs in the Tulbagh district with the admixed comparatively long gland-tipped hairs of the typical *O. Meisneri*, those with simple and both kinds of hairs actually growing in association (*Salter* 2171) in pine woods about five miles south

* The localities given for Zeyher's or Burke & Zeyher's Oxalis between numbers 244 and 255, viz. Berg River, Hex River or Berg and Hex Rivers, in many cases seem to be erroneous and the tickets appear to have been written from memory some time after collecting. The plants in question are known to belong to two different floral regions and several of the species reputed to be from Hex River (as in this case) are only known from the Tulbagh district, whereas those which are recorded from Berg River are found to occur only in the Hex River district.

of Tulbagh. The violet and yellow forms, whether with simple hairs only or with additional gland-tipped hairs are, allowing for epharmonic variation, identical in all other respects, with similar ovoid-globose



Oxalis Meisneri Sond. (Form with simple hairs only.) 1. Petal, natural size. 2. Sepal $\times 3$. 3. Gynaecium $\times 5$. 4. Androecium $\times 5$. 5. Plant, natural size. 6. Leaf $\times 3$. 7. Calyx and upper part of the peduncle of the glandular form. (Salter 4536.) Del. T.M.S.

hard blackish-brown bulbs, up to 2 cm. in diam. The difference in the size of the leaves, mentioned by Sonder, is not constant. Sonder's use of the word "tomentose" in describing the indument of *O. cana* is, I

think, misleading, for the pubescence, though fairly dense, is not matted. The creation of these two species provides a typical illustration of the danger of species-making upon the evidence of herbarium "scraps."

It is therefore proposed that the two species should be amalgamated under the name *O. Meisneri*, a plant now with four known Forms, for I am opposed to giving them varietal names. Such variations as flower colour and the presence or absence of glandular hairs are common in the genus and, were they treated as taxonomically varietal, as has sometimes previously been the practice, the number of named varieties would become altogether unwieldy.

The stems in all the forms branch freely, often much more than shown in the accompanying figure of the violet-flowered form with simple hairs only.

It is to be hoped that the *typical* form has not been eradicated through cultivation and will eventually be re-discovered in the vicinity of Tulbagh.